

**Massachusetts Prison Association.**

No. 29.

**The Boston Crime Question.**

Much of the indifference in relation to crime is due to the fact that accurate information as to the magnitude of the crime question is not easily to be had. This leaflet is designed to supply some of the principal facts, stated as concisely as possible, for the use of those who wish to study the subject.

**ARRESTS FOR CRIME.**

The number of arrests in Boston in 1908 was 68,146. 61,552 of the arrested persons were males; 6,594 were females.

The principal offences were drunkenness, 38,442 males; 4,026 females. Total, 42,468; breaking and entering, 692 (only four of the burglars were females); larcenies, 2,916 males, 621 females; robbery, 234 males, 3 females; assaults, 2,671 males, 301 females; murder, 19 males, 1 female; manslaughter, 14 males. Assault with intent to commit murder, 43; violation of various laws relating to gambling, 1,328 males, 5 females; vagrancy, 593 males, 11 females. Most of the other arrests were for minor offences, including many violations of city ordinances and regulations.

**JUVENILE CRIME.**

The crimes of children and youth have a large place. The number of arrests do not accurately measure juvenile criminality, as many are summoned, instead of being arrested. 260 boys and 60 girls under 10 years of age were arrested; 2,114 boys and 84 girls from 10 to 15; and 4,917 males and 364 females between 15 and 20.

The statutes provide for dealing with boys and girls under 17 years of age as "delinquent children"; and court statistics follow this age line. They show that 3,566 children under 17 were complained of in 1908. 646 of them were placed on probation; 320 were sent to institutions;

1,100 of the cases were placed on file, after a warning from the court. The remainder were disposed of in a variety of ways — by discharge, fines, dismissal, etc.

#### THE TAXPAYER'S BURDEN.

The costs of crime are for the maintenance of the police force and for the support of courts and of prisons. The police department costs the taxpayers \$1,943,847.69. The courts, reckoning that one-half the expense was for criminal business, cost \$165,164.35. The prisons, parental and reform schools cost \$380,067 — all these costs being excess of all receipts. The total of these local crime expenses paid by Boston taxpayers amounted to \$2,489,079.04. To this must be added \$415,453.50 for crime costs in state tax, making the total of crime costs paid by Boston taxpayers \$2,904,532.54.

If the crime-costs had been paid on a separate bill, they would have called for \$2.14 on each thousand dollars of taxable property.

In other words, more than one-eighth of all the money paid by Boston taxpayers was spent on account of crime — for police, courts, and prisons!

#### PRISON POPULATION.

The house of correction at Deer Island, the maintenance of which cost more than \$214,700, received 10,730 prisoners — 1,013 of them women. 4,456 of the prisoners were committed, not because the court sentenced them to prison, but because they happened to be too poor to pay their fines at the moment when sentence was imposed. 5,497 had sentences of less than six months. Only 385 were sentenced to terms of one year or more. Practically as many were released as were received. These men and women constituted a great procession, to and from the island, more than 200 returning to the community every week. Nearly 30 in every hundred were married — the imprisonment affecting wives, husbands, and children. Two-thirds of them had had previous experience in the same prison, many of them having served several terms.

#### COST OF PRISONS.

The daily average number supported was 1,275. (It is larger this year.) The valuation of the institution is \$1,262,000. In other words, the city has paid about \$1,000 for each prisoner, for buildings and real estate to supply his needs.

The jail, which has an average population of 299, is valued on the assessors' books at \$1,447,000, or \$4,825 for each inmate. (In both cases the institution furnishes quarters for the officers who care for the inmates.) The number of commitments to the jail cannot be given. It received 1,250 sentenced prisoners, committed on short sentences. About 7,500 others were committed to await trial or examination, but most of them remained for only a few days, until the court was ready to try them. In a considerable proportion of the cases the same man appeared several times on the books, on the same case, going to court and returning repeatedly.

#### CARING FOR CHILDREN.

Besides its two great prisons for adults, Boston maintains two institutions for court children—the Suffolk School for Boys who have committed offences, and the Parental School, for truant children. The former cares for substantially the same classes of boys who, in other parts of the state, are sent to the Lyman School. The average number cared for in 1908 was 161. The buildings are old, and not well adapted for the care and treatment of boys by modern methods. If the school is to continue in existence, it should be provided with modern buildings, with facilities for doing many things, universally recognized as indispensable, which cannot be done in the present buildings.

The Parental School has an average population of 234. Practically it is a part of the school system. It ranks among the best schools of its class in the country. Its scholars are largely from families which take little interest in the education of their children. Though they are committed by the courts, it is not for punishment, but to secure for them the instruction, care, and training which they would not get in their homes.

## BOSTON STATION HOUSES.

A few of the Boston station houses are modern. Most of them are old; some of them very old. The Charlestown station has but eighteen cells, while the number of prisoners frequently reaches forty or fifty, and on Sundays runs much higher. The cells are small and very dark, and some of them are damp. The ventilation is poor, very little fresh air reaching the inmates. The cells for women are so situated that every word spoken by any prisoner can be easily heard by those of the other sex. There is no provision for separating juvenile offenders from adults, or for separating different classes of offenders. Not infrequently two or three prisoners are put into a single cell.

In the courtroom women are separated from men only by a wire screen, which does not prevent them from seeing and talking with each other. The room used for the trial of children is so small that while one is on trial, others must remain in the courtroom in which the trial of adults is in progress.

At the South Boston courthouse there are four small, dark, poorly-ventilated cells for prisoners waiting trial. The number of prisoners is so large that three and sometimes four are crowded into a cell. The women prisoners are put into a cell adjoining those used for men, so that there is no bar to conversation between them and the men. There is only one cell for women, and young first offenders are put with old, hardened criminals. At Station No. 6, also, the cells are unfit for the detention of prisoners, some of whom remain for twenty-four hours, and when Sundays and holidays come together, for two days or more.

None of these station houses are fit for use, and they are so constructed that it would be a waste of money to remodel them. The erection of a new building at South Boston, and the removal of everything inside the four walls at Charlestown and the construction of new cells, afford the only remedy for existing evils.